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The Soviets' powerful political weapon

By Orrin G. Hatch

THERE are two basic types of weapons in the world: military hardware and ideological software. A strong defense is vital to our nation's security. However, I worry that while liberals and conservatives debate the nuclear balance and defense budget, another strategic issue is being overlooked: Soviet political warfare. Each year we spend billions of dollars on our military defense. But how much time, effort, and money do we devote to deterring the Soviets' ideological offensive?

The United States government estimates that Moscow is spending \$3 billion to \$4 billion a year on its political campaign aimed at breaking up the NATO alliance and destroying democracy. According to a new book entitled "Dezinformatsia," by Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, the Soviets have intensified their "active measures" campaign during the past 25 years. "Active measures" is a Soviet term to describe an array of overt and covert techniques to influence events in foreign countries. These techniques are carried out through officially recognized diplomatic channels and through covert activities such as distributing forged documents to newspaper reporters, using "agents of influence," operating international front organizations and clandestine radio networks, disseminating oral and written "disinformation," and perpetrating terrorist acts. Shultz and Godson state that the purpose of these devices is frequently "to deceive the target, and to distort the target's perceptions of reality."

It is not easy for Americans to grasp the full impact of Soviet active measures, partly because Western nations draw a sharp line between overt and covert political activities, and we follow an unwritten code of moral conduct. However, the Soviets have long-term global ambitions, and a strategy designed to achieve them. They see overt and covert propaganda techniques and military and political warfare and even truth and lies all in a continuum — regardless of whether US-Soviet relations are in a period of "détente." Brezhnev stressed that détente did not reduce the international competition between "different social systems, with differing ideologies . . . stemming from the class differences."

According to "Dezinformatsia," the Soviets have five objectives in their KGB-directed "active measures" campaign: (1) to portray the US as a threat to world peace; (2) to split the Western alliances; (3) to retain the primacy of the USSR in the communist world; (4) to promote those "national-liberation movements" which are under communist control or serve their interests; and (5) to expand security in those areas under the influence of the USSR. They work toward these objectives by influencing the perceptions of Western politicians, the media, and the

public on key strategic issues.

A case in point is the ongoing Soviet campaign against NATO's plans to modernize its intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). The active-measures apparatus in Moscow and the KGB pulled out all the stops for its anti-INF blitz, designed to misrepresent US military policy and weaken NATO. A succession of forged American and NATO classified documents was circulated purporting to show that the US had selfish economic motives for INF deployment and that the US was willing to sacrifice its NATO allies. In addition, Shultz and Godson write that "an authentic, unclassified US government map was misrepresented . . . so that the Pentagon could be charged with targeting Austrian cities and facilities for nuclear destruction in the event of war in Europe."

What is most alarming to me is the scope of Soviet "active measures." In Moscow alone, there are believed to be up to 15,000 Soviet personnel devoted to this task. There are about 1,300 Soviet officials in Washington, New York, and San Francisco. About 300 are known to be involved in covert political activities, and they in turn direct from one to five agents or contacts. A high percentage of Soviet "journalists," "trade officials," and "scholars" in the US are also believed to be intelligence officers.

According to Shultz and Godson's well-documented account, the Politburo's "international department" has improved its ability to respond to crises and key events. Practice makes perfect, and US sources report that Soviet forgeries have become more authentic, their networks more efficient, and that they have gained a better understanding of the nuances of the English language. In short, the "active measures" have become an extremely effective and powerful political weapon.

How can Americans from all shades of the political spectrum cope with this type of warfare? First, by educating themselves on this often overlooked subject. And second, by taking the offensive — not by imitating Soviet political strategy, but by working to give democracy a chance to flourish in other areas of the world. That is why I am a member of the board of the National Endowment for Democracy — because I believe that human beings deserve an alternative to a totalitarian system with global ambitions. As President Reagan stated in his June 1982 speech concerning the Endowment, "the ultimate determinant in the struggle now going on for the world will not be bombs and rockets, but a test of wills and ideas, a trial of spiritual resolve: the values we hold, the beliefs we cherish, the ideals to which we are dedicated."

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